



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCT. 21, 2009

CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN  
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR  
OFFICE – 928-871-7917  
CELL – 928-309-8532  
pressoffice@opvp.org

# Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., urges public, employees to remain calm, calls on leaders to respect one another

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., will speak to the Navajo people again on Thursday about the Navajo Nation Council's discussions to place him and Vice President Ben Shelly on administrative leave.

During his weekly KTNN radio address Wednesday, the President urged the public and Navajo Nation employees to remain calm and to not be worried about a recurrence of the 1989 government turmoil, which he said won't happen again.

The President's recorded message will air again Thursday at 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on KTNN 660 AM.

"Let us not be controlled by animosity," the President said. "Let us respect the land, the government, the prayers, the unity. Let us continue working together."

The President spoke for 22 minutes about the council's meeting on Monday when it cancelled his quarterly State of the Navajo Nation address to hear three investigative reports in executive session about OnSat Communications Network and Biochemical Decontamination Systems Manufacturing Co., or BCDS.

The reports allege improprieties and violations of law by President Shirley, Chief of Staff Patrick Sandoval, Controller Mark Grant, Division of Economic Development Director Allan Begay, Division of Public Safety Director Samson Cowboy and Division of Community Development Director Arbin Mitchell.

The reports led to the council drafting legislation to place the President and the Vice President on leave.

*Administrative leave would not serve the interests of the Navajo Nation. Instead, it would cause governmental instability, anxiety and distrust among Navajo citizens, insecurity and fear among companies doing business with the Nation, and significant concern and uncertainty among state and federal officials.*

– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

However, neither the President, his legal counsel, nor his staff were given copies of the reports nor told of the specific allegations against them.

"All I've heard is hearsay," President Shirley said. He said he believes that only a few Navajo Nation Council delegates are driving the effort to have him placed on leave, and that most of those he's spoken to remain cautious and unconvinced that the allegations against him rise to the level of placing the Navajo president on leave – an action which most likely would remain in effect until the end of his term in January 2011.

The President said placing him and the Vice President on administrative leave would not serve the interests of the Navajo Nation.

Instead, he said, it would cause governmental instability, anxiety and distrust among Navajo citizens, insecurity and fear among companies doing business with the Nation, and significant concern and uncertainty among state and federal officials.

"If we continue to fight among ourselves, it will cause instability," he said. "We shouldn't hold on to animosity."

The President said he has received reports of tribal employees being concerned about their safety, their employment, their programs' continuance, and over-reaction by others should the council ultimately place him and the Vice President on leave.

He asked that people remember their relationships among each other, asked for prayers, and added that the Navajo people's prayers are strong and that their traditional paraphernalia is sacred.

He said he is confident that administrative leave is an unlikely outcome because more council delegates and the public are becoming increasingly aware that he has not been informed of specific allegations, he has not been given an opportunity to present his response to the allegations, and he has not been afforded due process that has established reasonable grounds that he seriously breached his fiduciary responsibility.

He said he knows what was asked of him by investigators and what his responses to their questions were, and that the concerns don't rise to the level of suspending the President and Vice President.

Although the Navajo Nation was defrauded by former BCDS CEO Hak Ghun, he said he is not responsible for Mr. Ghun's wrongdoing.

He said his relationship with OnSat CEO David Stephens was always professional and courteous but did not go to

the point of showing favoritism. Mr. Stephens had an existing contract with the Navajo Nation prior to President Shirley taking office in January 2003.

Meanwhile, he said Council Delegate Curran Hannon, whom he calls his grandfather, has accused him of doing him wrong but that he does not know what harm he has done to him.

He said Mr. Hannon is sponsoring legislation to abolish the Office of the First Lady despite all of the good work Vikki Shirley has performed on behalf of the Navajo Nation as a volunteer. In addition, Mr. Hannon has called for the discontinuance of the Executive Protection Detail of Navajo police provided to the President, the Vice President and the First Lady.

"We need the services of the Navajo police so I can get to places safely," President Shirley said.

The President said he would vigorously defend himself against the accusations being made against him when he is given the chance.

In the meantime, he urged people to talk to their council delegates and to encourage them not to carelessly take the Nation down a path of unpredictability without a thoughtful, reasonable and justifiable cause because that would not be in the best interest of the people or the Nation.

"As we move forward, we will do our best to talk in defense of myself and my staff," he said. "I stress that this (administrative leave) is not going to happen if we work together with clanship, with communication."

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